Complexio Oppositorum: Hugo Ball and Carl Schmitt*

TREVOR STARK

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

On November 22, 1923, Emmy Hennings received an ecstatic letter from Hugo Ball, her husband and fellow founder of Zurich Dada, describing his "constant immersion in jurisprudence":

> For months, I have studied the writings of Professor Schmitt, of Bonn. He is more important for Germany than the entirety of the Rhineland, with its carbon mines included. Rarely have I read a philosophy with as much passion as his, and a philosophy of law at that! A great triumph for the German language and for legality. He seems to me even more precise than Kant, and rigorous like a Great Spanish Inquisitor when it comes to ideas.[1]

This testimonial of the high esteem in which the erstwhile Dadaist held Carl Schmitt, the German political philosopher and future legal adviser to the Nazis, is one of many traces of a short but intense intellectual and personal relationship that began in Munich in 1919 and led to Ball's essay "Carl Schmitt's Political Theology" (1924).[2] This text, appearing in English for the first time in this issue of *October*, is of capital importance for several reasons: not only does it constitute one of the earliest and most profound analyses of Schmitt's philosophical work, but the essay's "eschatological, Catholic" orientation casts an oblique and defamiliarizing light on the legacies of two of the Weimar period's most enigmatic and crucial figures.[3]

* Thanks are due to Joseph Koerner and Noah Feldman, whose seminar on Carl Schmitt sparked this essay. I am particularly grateful to Koerner for his invaluable advice on the essay, and to my fellow participants in the seminar, from whom I learned a great deal. I owe many thanks to Hal Foster, who conceived of this cluster dedicated to Ball and Schmitt, and to Matthew Vollgraff. Daniel Zolli, Aaron Wile, and Samuel Johnson deserve acknowledgement for their attentive critical reading.

1. Hugo Ball, "357. An Emmy Ball [22 November 1923]," in *Hugo Ball: Briefe*, vol. 1, *1904–1923*, ed. Gerhard Schaub and Ernst Teubner (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003), p. 472. Translations from German and French are my own unless otherwise noted.

2. Little is known of this first meeting, but Schmitt recalls that they discussed Léon Bloy. See André Doremus, "La théologie politique de Carl Schmitt vue par Hugo Ball en 1924," *Les Études Philosophiques* 68 (2004), p. 58.

3. Originally published as Ball, "Carl Schmitts Politische Theologie," *Hochland* 21 (April–September 1924), pp. 263–86. References are to the translation that appears in this issue, which will henceforth be cited parenthetically as CSPT.

Schmitt himself was evidently struck by Ball's piece, later describing it as "a brilliant essay with great appeal, of a sort that I scarcely encountered again in all my life. . . . An unusual essay in all regards, from the point of view of style as of content."[4] The article sparked a correspondence and prompted Schmitt and his wife to visit Ball and Hennings at their home in Sorengo, Switzerland, from August 19 to September 9, 1924.[5] During their time together, Schmitt asked Ball to write a new introduction to his *Political Romanticism* (1919), and the two discussed Ball's plans to revise his political tract *Critique of the German Intelligentsia* (1919) in light of his Catholic conversion.[6] Although, for reasons to be discussed, Ball never completed the introduction and would break off contact with Schmitt within a year, he could write Schmitt on November 19, 1924, "I vividly remember our evening in Sorengo; I still know it word for word."[7]

Many decades later, Schmitt continued to reflect on the significance of his meeting with Ball. On March 22, 1971, Ernst Forsthoff mailed Schmitt, his former professor, a review that he had written of a recent German reprint of Ball's *Critique*, which expurgated many of the text's most extreme passages and carefully sanitized its anti-Semitism, a fact that long delayed full recognition of this disturbing aspect of Ball's worldview.[8] In his review, Forsthoff mentioned the relationship between Schmitt and Ball, calling it a "mysterious episode."[9] Schmitt wrote back to Forsthoff thanking him for his review of the "pseudo-edition" of Ball's text and noted: "Ball is the founder of Dadaism and therefore also of Surrealism, i.e., the first, in the field of aesthetics, to rightly attack, to desperately protest against, the *Terror-Charakter* of modern 'reality.'"[10] Evidently, for Schmitt, his friendship with Ball was no mystery, for they shared a common enemy: modern "reality," a terrible counterfeit set into quotation marks. Forsthoff's reference to the "mysterious episode" provoked Schmitt to inscribe a marginal note on his copy of the review, later discovered by Ellen Kennedy among his papers: "A discussion very much in need of supplementation. Ball means more in my life than an episode."[11]

4. Joachim Schickel, "Gespräch über Hugo Ball (1970)," in *Gespräch mit Carl Schmitt* (Berlin: Merve Verlag, 1993), pp. 31–56, 92–163. Cited and translated into French by Doremus, "La théologie politique de Carl Schmitt," p. 57.
5. See *Ball: Briefe*, vol. 3, *Kommentar*, p. 440.
6. Ball recounted these details in an unsent letter to Schmitt: Ball, "465. An Carl Schmitt [January 27, 1925]," in *Ball: Briefe*, vol. 2, *1923–1927*, p. 110. See also Ellen Kennedy, "Carl Schmitt und Hugo Ball. Ein Beitrag zum Thema 'politischer Expressionismus,'" *Zeitschrift für Politik* 35, n. 2 (1988), pp. 143–62.
7. Ball, "445. An Carl Schmitt [November 19, 1924]," in *Ball: Briefe*, vol. 2, p. 88.
8. Carl Schmitt and Ernst Forsthoff, *Ernst Forsthoff Carl Schmitt Briefwechsel, 1926–1974*, ed. Angela Reinthal, Dorothee Mußgnug, and Reinhard Mußgnug (Berlin: Academie Verlag, 2007), p. 519. On the censorship of Ball's *Critique* in the first postwar reprint, published in Munich, 1970, by Rogner & Bernhard, see Anson Rabinbach, "The Inverted Nationalism of Hugo Ball's *Critique of the German Intelligentsia*," in Ball, *The Critique of the German Intelligentsia*, trans. Brian Harris (New York: Columbia University, 1999), pp. xxxv–xxxvi, note 1.
9. Forsthoff, quoted in Kennedy, "Carl Schmitt und Hugo Ball," p. 160.
10. Schmitt, *Ernst Forsthoff Carl Schmitt Briefwechsel*, p. 323.
11. Schmitt, quoted in Kennedy, "Carl Schmitt und Hugo Ball," p. 160.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

Hugo Ball. 1916.
Swiss Literary Archives (SLA),
Bern. Literary estate of Hugo Ball.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

Such supplementation still lacking, this episode has remained a historical curiosity, largely unfathomable to scholars of the Weimar period.[12] In the now substantial body of art-historical literature on Ball, his engagement with Schmitt has mostly been ignored as an unfortunate lapse with little bearing on the crucial Dada years. Likewise, scholars of Schmitt tend to regard the consummate political conservative's dalliance with Ball—"this extravagant bohemian, Dadaist convert to Catholicism"—with mild embarrassment, when it merits mention at all.[13] The scholarly silence on the Ball-Schmitt encounter has the benefit of leaving the sedimented striations of politico-aesthetic positions in Weimar more or less undisturbed: Schmitt's utmost seriousness as a thinker of Realpolitik is uncontaminated by Ball's apparent eccentricity, and the radicality of Ball's Dada sound poetry and performances is sealed off from his troubling political and theological commitments.

The historical legacies of Schmitt and Ball have neatly diverged, with each accorded a secure and separate place in the established narratives of European intellectual life during the tumultuous years between the First World War and the fatal collapse of the Weimar Republic. Our subject is the remainder of this division: the fact of their relationship, the depth of their shared presuppositions, and, above all, the hopes that they placed in their association. In dialogue with Schmitt, Ball slips from his place in the opposition of the "historical avant-garde" and the *retour à l'ordre*, acting as a bewildering *entre-deux*. His abandonment of the perceived nihilism of Zurich Dada for the security of moral tradition and political authority might seem a paradigmatic instance of the return to order.[14] However, unlike the artists who withdrew from the epistemological and political critique of the avant-garde for quietism and classicist pastiche in painting, Ball's turn to orthodoxy and authoritarianism took the form of a flight *from* the aesthetic in the name of a newly committed politicization. Further, in his unique interpretation of Schmitt's political theology, Ball believed that he had found a theory of representation that would unify his political, aesthetic, and metaphysical convictions, one that would supersede and realize the Dadaist dialectic of irrational revolt against a rationalistic age.

Tracing Ball and Schmitt's trajectories from 1916 to their meeting in 1924, this essay treats their affinity, to borrow Jacob Taubes's phrase, as a "ticking time bomb that comprehensively shatters our preconceptions regarding the intellectual history of the Weimar period."[15]

12. Significant exceptions are Ellen Kennedy's important essay, among the first and best investigations of Ball and Schmitt's association, and a more recent essay by André Doremus (both cited above).
13. Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt* (London: Verso Books, 2000), p. 270, ft. 16.
14. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting," *October* 16 (Spring 1981), pp. 39–68.
15. Taubes was referring to the long-suppressed correspondence between Schmitt and Walter Benjamin. Jacob Taubes, *To Carl Schmitt: Letters and Reflections*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University, 2013), p. 16.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

Carl Schmitt. 1926.
© Carl-Schmitt-Nachlaß.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

The Artist and the Sickness of the Time

Since May 1915, Ball, a German national, had been living a marginal existence in Zurich under a false identity to escape the war and the consequent political and intellectual censorship in Germany. There he played piano for a vaudeville group, published poetry, continued work on projected studies of Nietzsche and Bakunin, and began a correspondence with Filippo Tommaso Marinetti; at the same time, he and Hennings slipped in and out of homelessness and imprisonment and experienced a despair that culminated in Ball's attempt at suicide in October 1915.[16] Following his recovery, which Ball described as a process of "discard[ing] the Ego like a coat full of holes," his diaries evince a growing sense of "giddy horror at the nothingness of what former generations called humanity" and the conviction that in the face of the "mechanistic age" that had led to the trenches of World War I, "aesthetic production becomes a prescribed course" (FT 49). The minimal autonomy of the artistic sphere, like Zurich itself—"a birdcage surrounded by roaring lions"—provided, for Ball, an arena within which to resist the rationalizing and intellectualizing tendencies of the time, which fostered abstract idealism in philosophy, the collusion of religious and military authority, and the progressive encroachment of the "legal mechanism" into all sectors of social life (FT 34). With the foundation of the Cabaret Voltaire and Zurich Dada in February 1916, Ball put into practice his conviction that "all living art will be irrational, primitive, and complex; it will speak a secret language and leave behind documents not of edification, but of paradox" (FT 49).

The extent to which this embrace of paradox determined Ball's worldview is illustrated by a postcard that he sent to his fellow Dadaist Tristan Tzara from Vira-Magadino on July 31, 1916.[17] The postcard is printed with what is undoubtedly the most well-known document of Zurich Dada's ephemeral activities: the famous photograph of Ball's first performance of the *Verse ohne Worte*, or poems without words, held at the Cabaret Voltaire the month prior, on June 23, 1916. It shows Ball dressed in a "cubist costume" made by himself and Marcel Janco, complete with a cardboard cape, reflective blue cylinders as legs, robotic or crustacean claws, and a striped "witch-doctor's hat" (FT 71). He stands stiffly before two music stands, restricted by the tubular forms of his costume. The indurate restraint of Ball's dress contrasts sharply with other experiments in avant-garde costume that applied the Cubist idiom of multiplied and faceted chromatic planes to clothing as a means of implying a dynamic body being ecstatically propelled into an uncertain

16. The broad strokes of Ball's biography are given by John Elderfield in his introduction to Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, ed. John Elderfield, trans. Ann Raimes (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), p. xix. All subsequent references to Ball's diary will be noted parenthetically as FT. See also the excellent essay on Zurich Dada by Leah Dickerman in *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), pp. 19–44.

17. This postcard is in the Fonds Tristan Tzara (TZR C 286), Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, Université de Paris, and published as "93. An Tristan Tzara [31 Juli 1916]," in *Ball: Briefe*, vol. 1, p. 117.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

future.[18] In Ball's costume, instead, this most modern aesthetic not only rendered its wearer immobile and mechanical, it also mimed the ancient ritual garments of the shaman, priest, and mystic.

The very existence of the postcard, produced so soon after the event, indicates a desire, shared between the two Dadaists, to memorialize the performance. Yet Ball's brief note to Tzara on the reverse seems written from another world. It describes a small church in which Ball and Hennings were living, near the fifteenth-century sanctuary of the Madonna del Sasso, overlooking Lake Maggiore. "Vira-Magadino is more beautiful than Zurich, Dada, and all related topics," Ball wrote, and recounted preaching to the fish in the lake, listening to the "terrifying" church bells, and singing "*quanto è bella, quanto è nobile*" as he read Dostoyevsky.[19] The split between the image on the front, one of the most momentous instances of Dada's destructive revolt, and the note on the back, describing an immersion in an atmosphere of spiritual withdrawal, manifests, almost materializes, the irresolvable ambivalence that characterizes Ball's contribution to the history of avant-garde art.

When the stage lights hit him that night in Zurich, Ball read a manifesto proclaiming that the redemption of language would involve the abandonment of all conventions of human speech and writing, a plunge into the mystical depths of the word: "We must return to the innermost alchemy of the word, we must even give up the word too, to keep for poetry its last and holiest refuge. We must give up writing secondhand: that is, accepting words (to say nothing of sentences) that are not newly invented for our own use" (FT 71). Following this, Ball began reciting his *Lautgedichte*, or sound poems, in which language was reduced to the smallest phonetic element—the phoneme—and restructured from that base into verses, wholly stripped of conventional linguistic signification, based on rhythmic and sonic rather than semantic or syntactical relations.[20] "*Gadji beri bimba glandridi laula lonni cadori/gadjama gramma berida bimbala glandri galassassa laulitalomini*," he intoned, the phonetic shards splitting, combining, and metastasizing with frenetic speed and intensity. After finishing his poem, the lights went out and he was carried off the stage, trembling, "like a magical bishop" (FT 71).

In his journal, Ball described this performance in the language of theological revelation, confirming the tension between the modern and the ancient, the pro-

18. One thinks, for example, of the anti-"passéist" fashion imagined by Giacomo Balla in his "Futurist Manifesto of Men's Clothing" (1913), in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (New York: Viking Press, 1972), pp. 132–34. More ambiguous temporal orientations were proposed in Picasso's costumes for Erik Satie's *Parade*, 1917, and Sonia Delaunay's costumes for Tristan Tzara's *Coeur à gaz*, 1923. On *Parade*, see Jeffrey Weiss, *The Popular Culture of Modern Art: Picasso, Duchamp, and Avant-Gardism* (New Haven: Yale University, 1994), pp. 165–254.

19. Ball, *Ball: Briefe*, vol. 1, p. 117.

20. T. J. Demos has contributed greatly to our understanding of Zurich Dada's language and performance, especially in relation to the conditions of exile. See T. J. Demos, "Zurich Dada: The Aesthetics of Exile," in *The Dada Seminars*, ed. Leah Dickerman (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), pp. 6–29, and Demos, "Circulations: In and Around Zurich Dada," *October* 105 (Summer 2003), pp. 147–58.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

fane and the spiritual, that were evident in the postcard and in his costume.[21] He wrote,

> [M]y voice had no choice but to take on the ancient cadence of priestly lamentation, that style of liturgical singing that wails in all the Catholic churches of East and West . . . . I began to chant my vowel sequences in a church style like a recitative . . . . For a moment it seemed as if there were a pale, bewildered face in my cubist mask, that half-frightened, half-curious face of a ten-year-old boy, trembling and hanging avidly on the priest's words in the requiem and high masses in his home parish (FT 71).

Experiencing avant-garde negativity taken to its limits, Ball discovered himself carried back to a place of origin both personal and theological, rooted in the rituals and metaphysical promises of his childhood church. This potential for nihilism to reverse into messianism, for aesthetic materialism to reveal a theological core, is by no means an inevitable consequence of Dada's work on the signifier, as evinced by the varied implications of Tzara's simultaneous poems, Richard Huelsenbeck's rhythmic poetic primitivism, Kurt Schwitters' *Ursonate*, and Raoul Hausmann's typographic experiments, to name only a few. Neither, however, can Ball's revelation that the techniques of the avant-garde and those of religious ritual were oriented toward the same end be dismissed as a deviation from the heroically secularizing impulse of modernism.[22] Rather, Ball's work shows how the avant-garde's challenge to the signifying value of the word and the ordering function of syntax implied a dialectic between destruction and redemption.

The tension indicates the place of the Dada phonetic poem within the parameters established by Stéphane Mallarmé in the last decades of the nineteenth century.[23] In his quest for a poetry irreducible to the norms of instrumental communication, one conceived of as the "exception to everything," Mallarmé chiseled away at the representational function of language; in his words, "I created my work only by elimination. . . . Destruction was my Béatrice."[24] This work of negation led

21. Hennings claimed in her 1946 prologue to Ball's diaries that in Zurich, "the rebel already has something in him of the devout believer" and that his diaries evinced an inexorable "way to God" (FT lv).

22. Jeffrey Schnapp contends that "the avant-garde's radical rhetorics of demolition have a built-in tendency to find themselves entwined within the familiar patterns of apophatic mysticism." See Jeffrey Schnapp, "Bad Dada (Evola)," in *The Dada Seminars*, p. 36.

23. Zurich Dada's debt to Mallarméan poetics cannot be adequately addressed here. Suffice it to say that Ball himself recited Mallarmé at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 (Ball, *Briefe*, Band III, pp. 96, 106) and that the "*note pour les bourgeois*" written by Tzara for the "simultaneous poem" *L'admiral cherche une maison à louer* (1916) stated that the Dada experiments with language followed the "typographic reform" initiated by Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (1897). In 1924, Ball also wrote a poem entitled "Mallarmés Blumen" and mentions working on a translation of Mallarmé in his daybook: see Ball, *Gedichte*, ed. Eckhard Faul (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007), pp. 162, 290.

24. Stéphane Mallarmé, "Music and Letters," in *Divagations*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2009), p. 186. Mallarmé, *Correspondance complète, 1862–1871* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), p. 348–49.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

Mallarmé to his discovery of the void, or *le Néant*, during what has come to be known as his "Crise de Tournon" of 1866. This void, described in his letters and mobilized in his poetry, has dual implications that are vital for understanding Ball's work, insofar as for Mallarmé it referred simultaneously to the nonexistence of God ("that old and evil plumage, happily struck down") and the "deficiency" of language stemming from the arbitrariness of the signifier ("languages imperfect insofar as they are many; the absolute one is lacking").[25] Proceeding from this void, Mallarmé progressively exacerbated the rift between words and their senses, eventually inventing a neologism determined by the strictures of meter and rhyme in his "Sonnet en –yx" (1887), first titled "Sonnet Allegorical of Itself" and begun in 1868. In this refractive poem, which describes a constellation of stars through a casement window reflected in a mirror in an empty room, the interior scene and its objects dissipate into versified sound as language's descriptive or semantic function is sacrificed by the poet: "On the credenzas in the empty salon: no *ptyx*/Abolished bauble of sonorous inanity."[26] *Ptyx*, a Mallarméan *hapax legomenon*, is a word that literally means nothing: It stands in for the generative absence at the source of language and the world: "The intimate correlation between Poetry and the Universe."[27]

While Mallarmé dreamt that a poetics dedicated to the void would provide the secular foundation for new forms of sociality and public ritual, Ball's reduction of human communication to asignifying matter constituted a terrified response to the annihilating nightmare of a materialistic universe that had abandoned God.[28] Ball concurred with Mallarmé's insight that the "death of God" would imply the word's lack of divinity, but conceived this condition as the result of a historical process of profanation at the hands of techno-rationalist society's "modern necrophilia": "The word has been abandoned; it used to dwell among us. The word has become commodity . . . [and] has lost all dignity" (FT 26). In a 1917 essay on Kandinsky, Ball described the destruction of all the former safeguards of human value, from the holiness of the word to the notion that Man was created in God's image:

> God is dead. A world disintegrated . . . . There are no . . . foundations any more—they have all been blown up . . . . Man lost his divine countenance, became matter, chance, an aggregate, animal, the lunatic prod-

25. Mallarmé, *Correspondance complète*, p. 342 and Mallarmé, "Crisis of Verse," in *Divagations*, p. 205.
26. Mallarmé, "Ses pures ongles . . . ," in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1945), p. 68.
27. Mallarmé, *Correspondance complète*, p. 366.
28. This dimension of Mallarmé's thought culminated in his notes for "Le Livre," a utopian book that would disperse the singularity of authorship and the instrumentality of communication through the collective performance of an infinitely iterable text. Jacques Scherer, *Le "Livre" de Mallarmé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957).

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

> uct of thoughts quivering abruptly and ineffectually. . . . Man, stripped of the illusion of godliness, became ordinary, no more interesting than a stone (FT 223–24).

The oscillation between the melancholic and the exultant in Ball's Dada writing shows the horror he felt at the thought of a world governed by instrumental reason without access to the traditions that had once sustained human community. But it also demonstrates an eschatological conviction that the spiritual redemption of a world of debased matter could be achieved only upon ashes.

The *Verse ohne Worte* are structures of deep ambivalence, riven by Ball's desire to evoke both destruction and creation—negation and replenishment—to reflect the terrible "nothingness" of the age and to provide a language for its transcendence. Seen from one angle, Ball's Dada poetry conceived the annihilation of the word as a mimetic project, mirroring the shock of modernity and the erosion of all stable grounds of meaning. Hal Foster has aptly described this as the "immunological" dimension of Dada, in which art absorbed at the level of form what Ball called the "sickness of the time," exemplified by the irrational destruction of life in the war.[29] In this sense, the Dadaist anti-aesthetic refused the conception of art as a space of sublimation, where the antagonisms and degradations of the age would find their illusory resolution. Instead, art would have no recourse but to the irrational, to the sardonic pantomime in which "the horror of our time, the paralyzing background of events, is made visible" (FT 65).

Seen from another angle, however, Ball just as often described his poetic work as an attempt to overcome the founding deficiency of language noted by Mallarmé and to regain an immediate and direct link between the word and the world. By the time of his performance at the Cabaret Voltaire, Ball had begun to conceive of his poems as being constructed not of words but of composite "word images" that have "driven the plasticity of the word to the point where it can scarcely be equaled" (FT 67). The "word image," he wrote, would achieve its "holiness" by disintegrating the rational and disciplinary laws of human language: "We have loaded the word with strengths and energies that helped us to rediscover the evangelical concept of the 'word' (*logos*) as a magical complex image" (FT 68). In a diary entry from June 13, 1916, Ball compared the Dadaists to a Gnostic sect and described a process of aesthetic sacrifice and reincarnation: "The word and the image are one. Painter and poet belong together. Christ is image and word. The word and the image are crucified" (FT 66). Evidently, the union of opposites that Ball sought to achieve in his poetry—reflection/replenishment, destruction/cre-

29. Hal Foster, "Dada Mime," *October* 105 (Summer 2003), p. 170. See Ball's 1926 essay "Der Künstler und die Zeitkrankheit," in Ball, *Der Künstler und die Zeitkrankheit: Ausgewählte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 102–49.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

ation, novelty/restoration, word/image—was further from a Hegelian model of contradiction and sublation, and closer to the Christian notion of redemption, symbolized by the Crucifixion: As with the sacrifice of God-become-man, who died to redeem humanity's original sin, the word would have to be abnegated in order to achieve a divine language unifying signifier and signified.

In Ball's Dada poetry, extremes touch: An inheritor of Mallarmé's poetic materialism reaches for the divine logos; the Cabaret Voltaire, the locus in exile of the political and artistic avant-gardes, is imagined as the site of high Mass; and what Walter Benjamin called the "uselessness . . . [for] contemplative immersion" of Dadaist language[30] becomes the departure point for a conception of the artist as "administrator of the *vita contemplativa*" (FT 104). These contradictions would only intensify as Ball abandoned Dada in the name of politicization and religious conversion, and discovered the thought of Carl Schmitt.

Romantic Indecision

In 1916, Carl Schmitt shared Ball's diagnosis—if not his prescriptions—regarding a world dominated by a process of secularization that had reduced all the "higher values" to mere technical categories. During the war years, Schmitt was not yet the counterrevolutionary theoretician of sovereignty that he was to become; rather, he moved in Expressionist circles in Munich while stationed there as a non-combatant sergeant. Immersing himself in the artistic and intellectual climate of the cafés, even publishing Expressionistic texts, Schmitt seems to have shown little patriotic enthusiasm for the German war effort and little indication of the right-wing politics that he would develop in the Weimar years.[31]

The same year that Ball first took the stage at the Cabaret Voltaire, Schmitt published a monograph on the Expressionist writer Theodor Däubler's epic poem "Nordlicht" and proposed a politically ambiguous critique of secular reason's forward march that had much in common with Ball's abhorrence of "modern necrophilia." In a passage worth quoting at length, Schmitt wrote,

> This age has characterized itself as the capitalistic, mechanistic, relativistic age, as the age of transport, of organization. Indeed, business does seem to be its trademark, business as the superbly functioning means to some pathetic or senseless end, the universal priority of the

30. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 4, *1938–1940,* ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2003), p. 266.

31. In fact, Schmitt, as Gopal Balakrishnan puts it, demonstrated "an almost abnormal indifference to the national cause . . . for someone who was neither on the Left nor a pacifist." Balakrishnan, *The Enemy*, p. 17. As late as 1918, Schmitt would publish a literary piece in the journal *Summa*, which also published Ernst Bloch and Robert Musil. See Horst Bredekamp, "From Walter Benjamin to Carl Schmitt, via Thomas Hobbes," *Critical Inquiry* 25, n. 2 (Winter 1999), p. 251.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

> means over the end. . . . The achievement of vast, material wealth, which arose from the general preoccupation with means and calculation, was strange. Men have become poor devils; "they know everything and believe nothing.". . . They wanted heaven here on earth, in Berlin, Paris, or New York, a heaven with swimming facilities, automobiles, and club chairs, a heaven in which the holy book would be the timetable. . . . After all, the most important and last things had already been secularized. Right had become might; loyalty, calculability; truth, generally acknowledged correctness; beauty, good taste; Christianity, a pacifist organization. A general substitution and forgery of values dominated their souls. A sublimely differentiated usefulness and harmfulness took the place of the distinction between good and evil. The confounding was horrific.[32]

In this early text, Schmitt formulated a critique of bourgeois rationalism and secularism in terms parallel to those of Ball's Dadaist critique of language. For Schmitt, as for Ball, language itself had been subjected to a process of laicization, in which the words that once embodied supra-human values (right, loyalty, truth, God, good, evil) were drained of their substance, remaining in general use as secular ciphers for a disavowed theological content. Both Ball and Schmitt, then, set themselves in the starkest possible contrast against the backdrop of a world conceived as "a tabula rasa" of "scientific, technical, industrial progress," as Schmitt would later put it.[33]

The perhaps surprising fact that Schmitt's 1916 attack on the bourgeoisie as the heralds of an "age of security" should at times begin to resemble the proclamations of Zurich Dada is evidence of the extreme variety of political and aesthetic positions that could be grouped in these years under the aegis of what Georg Lukács would dub "Romantic anti-capitalism."[34] As described by Michael Löwy in an important series of texts on this phenomenon, "The essential characteristic of Romantic anti-capitalism is a thorough critique of modern industrial (bourgeois) civilization (including the process of production and work) in the name of certain pre-capitalist social and cultural values."[35] Romanticism, for Löwy, is less a particu-

32. Schmitt, *Theodor Däublers 'Nordlicht.' Drei Studien über die Elemente, den Geist und die Aktualität des Werkes* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1991), pp. 63–65. Cited and translated in Heinrich Meier, *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt: Four Chapters on the Distinction Between Political Theology and Political Philosophy*, trans. Marcus Brainard (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998), pp. 2–3.

33. Schmitt, *Political Theology II: The Myth of the Closure of Any Political Theology*, trans. Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), pp. 128–30.

34. Schmitt, quoted in Meier, *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt*, p. 4. According to Michael Löwy, Lukács first uses the term in a 1931 essay on Dostoyevsky, "Über den Dostojevski Nachlass," *Moskauer Rundschau* (March 22, 1931). Michael Löwy, "Naphta or Settembrini? Lukács and Romantic Anticapitalism," *New German Critique* 42 (Autumn 1987), p. 23.

35. Löwy, "The Romantic and the Marxist Critique of Modern Civilization," *Theory and Society* 16, n. 6 (November 1987), p. 891. See also Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. Catherine Porter (Durham: Duke University, 2001).

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

lar artistic or literary movement than a worldview born from and set in opposition to capitalist modernity, and one that attained a particular intensity in the Weimar years. The Romantic anti-capitalist cast of mind is defined above all by the opposition of "*Gemeinschaft,* the old organic community of direct social relations, to *Gesellschaft,* the mechanical and artificial aggregate of people around utilitarian aims," and could be just as attractive to conservatives as to utopians.[36] Löwy cites the circle around Max Weber in the 1910s—which included Ernst Bloch, Lukács, and, tangentially, Schmitt—as a paradigmatic instance of the way in which the critique of the "disenchantment of the world" or the "quantification of life" gave rise to a variegated set of political stances.[37]

Ball's horror at the disintegration of all "foundations" and the consequent loss of "Man['s] . . . divine countenance" can be thought in relation not only to Schmitt's critique of bourgeois society, "which annihilates the individual such that he does not even feel his nullification," but also to Lukács' Marxist critique of reification, wherein "the relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity.'"[38] This is not to imply the equivalence or equality of these diametrically opposed political stances; only to suggest that the rejection of capitalist rationalization in these years was divided and did not necessarily imply a Marxist position. Indeed, Romantic anti-capitalism, as described by Löwy, held in tension two antinomic "streams": a utopian and revolutionary stream and a conservative and reactionary stream.[39]

If the Romantic critique of capitalism was inherently split in these years, so too was the critique of Romanticism by repentant ex-Romantics. While orthodox Communists, following Lukács' recantations of the Stalinist period, conceived Romanticism as a regressive tendency leading to fascism, the Romantic phenomenon was also condemned from the right, most notably by Schmitt.[40] In fact, Romanticism

36. Löwy, "The Romantic and the Marxist Critique," p. 892.

37. Although never formally Weber's student, Schmitt likely attended his Munich lectures on science and politics in the late 1910s. In addition, as Jacob Taubes notes, Schmitt's "onslaught on liberal modernity," *Political Theology,* was originally published as part of two *Festschriften* for Max Weber: *Hauptprobleme der Soziologie* (1923), ed. Melchor Palyi, and *Archiv für Rechts- und Wirtschaftsphilosophie,* vol. 16 (1922); see Taubes, *To Carl Schmitt,* p. 4. Thanks to Matthew Vollgraff for this information. Regarding Schmitt, Lukács, and Weber, see John P. McCormick, "Transcending Weber's Categories of Modernity? The Early Lukács and Schmitt on the Rationalization Thesis," *New German Critique* 75 (Autumn 1998), p. 133–77.

38. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness,* trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), p. 83.

39. Löwy, "Naphta or Settembrini?," p. 18. For Löwy, Marxism is similarly split between a progressivist "cold stream" of "alienated productivism," finding its apogee in Stalin, and a "warm stream" that preserves the Romantic celebration of creativity *within* the Marxist ambit. Löwy, "The Romantic and the Marxist Critique," pp. 900–01.

40. In 1933, Lukács criticized *History and Class Consciousness* as dangerously idealist: "As a follower of Simmel and Dilthey, as a friend of Max Weber and Emil Lask, as an enthusiastic reader of Stefan George and Rilke, I myself lived all the evolution described here. . . . I had to see several friends of my youth, sincere and convinced romantic anticapitalists, carried away in the tempest of fascism." Cited in Löwy, "Naphta or Settembrini?," p. 24. In 1952, Lukács would assimilate Romanticism to a prehistory of Nazism in his book *The Destruction of Reason,* trans. Peter Palmer (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981).

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

first appeared as an enemy in Lukács' work in his surprisingly positive 1928 review of Schmitt's recently reissued *Political Romanticism*.[41] In this book, Schmitt implicitly renounced the positions staked out in his Däubler book and purged his thought of its brief infatuation with Expressionism. Seeking, as Gopal Balakrishnan puts it, "to break the clammy grip of aestheticism on his imagination and style," Schmitt took special aim at Romanticism's seemingly infinite political capaciousness, its capacity to accommodate—sometimes in the same figure—both political radicalism and conservatism, religious mysticism and libertarian individualism.[42]

In his review, Lukács argued that Schmitt's book had rightly gained an audience among opponents of the "current Romantic fashion" for its diagnosis of an "overgrowth of the aesthetic principle [which] not only . . . renders any political opinion impossible," but which also has "devastating effects . . . on the aesthetic itself."[43] While noting Schmitt's insufficient understanding of class, Lukács concurred with his argument that Romanticism's incoherence was the result of its filtering of politics through aesthetics.[44] It is striking that for Lukács, as for Schmitt, the critique of Romanticism as an aesthetic flight from the rigors of political commitment coincided with, if not precipitated, their respective moments of ultimate political decision. Lukács reconciled with Stalin the year of his review, and, with *Political Romanticism*, Schmitt definitively rooted his critique of the bureaucratization of life within the conservative counterrevolutionary tradition, constructing a canon of reactionary thinkers including Juan Donoso Cortés, Louis Gabriel Ambroise de Bonald, and Joseph de Maistre, the importance of which would only grow in his subsequent trilogy *On Dictatorship* (1921), *Political Theology* (1922), and *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* (1923).

With *Political Romanticism* in 1919, Schmitt was concerned not only to rescue these conservative thinkers from their ill-deserved reputations as Romantics but also to offer a critical account of "the structure of the Romantic spirit." Romanticism, for Schmitt, was not simply a historically bounded aesthetic movement, nor could its character be distilled from a list of its component parts or themes—Schmitt sardonically listed "the Middle Ages, chivalry, the feudal aristocracy, and old castles" among "cherished Romantic objects."[45] Even less could the Romantic firmly be associated with the political left or right, as it did not consti-

41. Lukács, "Carl Schmitt: Politische Romantik," in *Werke, Band 2: Frühschriften II: Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1968), pp. 695–96; quoted in Löwy, "Naphta or Settembrini?," p. 22, note 13.
42. Balakrishnan, *The Enemy*, p. 21.
43. Lukács, "Carl Schmitt: Politische Romantik," p. 695.
44. For Lukács, Schmitt's "bourgeoisie" was a "pale and empty generality" in comparison with the Marxist analysis of Romanticism as a product of "the inner stratification of the German bourgeoisie of the period." Ibid.
45. Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, trans. Guy Oakes (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), p. 9. References to *Political Romanticism* will henceforth be noted parenthetically in the text as PR.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

tute a political stance. Rather, the Romantic move par excellence was precisely to avoid the political decision through a process of aestheticization or poeticization, pretending to have resolved any number of concrete contradictions by transposing them to a higher sphere. Therefore, the two words of Schmitt's title in fact constitute an oppositional dyad: The Romantic subject can aestheticize politics, but in its essence Romanticism is the deferral of the political.

Against his own Romantic anti-capitalist reading of Däubler three years prior, Schmitt argued that the Romantic imagination was not, as typically conceived, a form of resistance to the processes of rationalization and secularization that culminated in capitalism; rather, bourgeois disenchantment and calculation produced Romanticism as a by-product. In Schmitt's historical schema, Romanticism was merely the most degraded symptom of secular progress, whereby "the highest and most certain reality of traditional metaphysics, the transcendent God, was eliminated" (PR 58). Lacking, or rather having voluntarily destroyed "the ultimate point of legitimization in historical reality," which is to say the God of classical metaphysics, the bourgeois class and its Romantic culture rushed to replace the absent absolute with any number of surrogates (PR 58).

Schmitt invented the epithet "subjectified occasionalism" to describe the structure of Romanticism and its place in this historical narrative. If Malebranche's metaphysics posited an "occasionalism" in which the world and its contents were merely the occasion for God's productivity, and "bourgeois" philosophies such as Hegelianism progressively replaced the "superindividual validity" of the divine with the secular "demiurges" of the People and History, the Romantic spirit completed this process by placing creative individuality at the center of the world (PR 59). In the Romantic imaginary, all political conflicts and historical events became mere *occasions* for subjective and aesthetic productivity, through which the either/or decision at the heart of politics could be avoided through the aesthetic modes of harmonizing, ironizing, balancing, and digressing. Thus, for Schmitt, Romanticism was the aesthetic complement to bourgeois parliamentary democracy, which abjured the difficult political decision in favor of the "endless conversation":

> The distinctive character of Romantic occasionalism is that it subjectifies the main factor of the occasionalist system: God. In the liberal bourgeois world, the detached, isolated, and emancipated individual becomes the middle point, the court of last resort, the absolute. . . . Psychologically and historically, Romanticism is a product of bourgeois security (PR 99).

In *Political Romanticism*, in other words, the aesthetic was no longer a site of potential criticism against, or at least a refuge from, the profane world of calculation, security, and mechanism. Instead, it was merely another manifestation of the counterfeiting and weakening of metaphysical categories. To aestheticize something,

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

according to Schmitt, was not only to secularize but ultimately to privatize the object of one's attention. The "absolutization of art" proclaimed in Romanticism, then, coincided with an absolutization of the emancipated ego that Schmitt identified as one of the key precepts of bourgeois ideology. The stakes of Schmitt's opposition to Romanticism and to the aesthetic as such found their ultimate expression in a passage from *The Concept of the Political* (1927). There he imagined a world in which bourgeois liberalism successfully replaced the authentic political decision—epitomized by the friend/enemy distinction—with democratic deliberation and discussion.[46] This would result in a society with "neither politics nor state, but culture, civilization, economics, morality, law, art, entertainment, and so on."[47] The liberal vision of a world without enemies, where all political distinctions become mere differences of opinion or taste, was therefore not only a world without politics; it was by extension a world without "seriousness"—of any reason to kill or be killed. Within Schmitt's thought, the aesthetic in itself—particularly the Romantic dream of the aesthetic transformation of the world—represented the substitution of the individual subject for God and the infinite deferral of politics in favor of a proliferation of merely "interesting" differences.[48] Aesthetic liberation only garnished the apolitical world of the *clase discutidora*, the bourgeois "discussing class," who, Schmitt acerbically noted, would answer the question "Christ or Barabbas?" with "a proposal to adjourn or appoint a commission of investigation."[49]

The Path of Social Productivity

On July 14, 1916, at the "first public dada soirée" in Zurich's Waag Hall, Ball performed his *Lautgedichte* and read a manifesto satirizing the aspirations of Dada to become "a new tendency in art" and mocking "Dada literature, dada bourgeoisie . . . Dada world war without end, dada revolution without beginning" (FT

46. Schmitt's attempt in *The Concept of the Political* to establish the friend-enemy distinction as the foundation of the political as such will not occupy us in this essay, nor, generally, will the work Schmitt published after Ball's essay. For an excellent recent discussion of this issue in the wider context of Schmitt's thought, see Tracy B. Strong, "Carl Schmitt and the Exceptional Sovereign," in *Politics without Vision: Thinking without a Banister in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2012), pp. 218–62.

47. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 53. As Leo Strauss notes, the "and so on" somewhat disingenuously glosses over the fact that art and entertainment are the *finis ultimus* of the series. Leo Strauss, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*," in ibid., p. 116.

48. Schmitt writes, "A world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics." Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 35.

49. The term *clase discutidora* comes from Spanish conservative and counterrevolutionary Donoso Cortés. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005), p. 62. Henceforth quoted parenthetically as PT.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

220).[50] This was conceived as "a thinly disguised break with friends." And evidently, Ball recalled, the friends "felt so too" (FT 73). While Ball would continue to participate in Tzara's "Galerie Dada" until May 1917, the grounds were already firmly prepared for his split from the avant-garde. In August 1916, Tzara sent Ball a critique of the Dada journal *Cabaret Voltaire* by Henri Guilbeaux, in which the latter argued, "One must fight this periodical because it is a symptom of artistic and literary disintegration—parallel to the disorganization of contemporary society."[51] In a remarkable letter, Ball wrote back to Tzara the next month, agreeing with Guilbeaux's diagnosis: "He is quite right. The Cabaret Voltaire is useless, bad, decadent, militarist. . . . No more 'blasphemy,' no more 'irony' (that is filthy, vulgar), no more satire (who has the right to do so?), no more 'intelligentsia.' . . . Enough of it! *Écrasez*!"[52]

Almost immediately after he descended the stage of the Cabaret Voltaire, Ball began to reconsider his view of Dada as an attempt to prepare the ground for a re-divinization of the word, of matter, and of the human through the total embrace of the irrational in art.[53] One could say that Ball came increasingly to see an irresolvable contradiction between the "immunological" and the redemptive halves of his Dada project. For Ball, Dada had fallen prey to the "superstition" that the critique of morality could serve the moral "elevation of Man" and that the critique of reason would lead directly to the "irrational, foolish-sublime, inexhaustible miracle of life" (FT 79). In short, faced with the collapse of the "false structure" erected by secular reason, Ball could no longer accept Dada's Nietzschean "transvaluation of all values" and sought to "move away as far as possible, into tradition . . . into the supernatural" (FT 82).

Just as decisive for his exit from Dada were Ball's growing dissatisfaction with the aesthetic critique of modernity and his vertiginous sense of the gap between the epistemological challenges put forward in art and the sociopolitical order within which all culture was comfortably ensconced. With Romantic malaise, he despaired, "Where is the path that links . . . the most outlandish dream to the most banal reality? Where is the path of social productivity for this

50. That Ball repeated his "magic bishop" performance was established in Philip Mann, "Hugo Ball and the 'Magic Bishop' Episode: A Reconsideration," *New German Studies* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 43–52. See also Debbie Lewer, "Hugo Ball, Iconoclasm, and the Origins of Dada in Zurich," *Oxford Art Journal* 32, no.1 (March 2009), p. 29.

51. Quoted in Philip Mann, *Hugo Ball: An Intellectual Biography* (London: University of London, Institute of Germanic Studies, 1987), p. 92. Guilbeaux, an anarchist anti-modernist, had earlier advanced a similar argument in his critique of Picasso: "What [Picasso] offers us today accentuates the intentional distortions, which sometimes reach the level of the grotesque, the ugly." See Guilbeaux, "'Exposition Pablo Picasso (Vollard, rue Laffitte),' *Les Hommes du Jour* (7 January, 1911)," in *A Cubism Reader*, ed. Patricia Leighten and Mark Antliff (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2008), p. 94.

52. Ball, "104. An Tristan Tzara [September 27, 1916]," in *Ball: Briefe*, vol. 1, pp. 128–29.

53. Ball's posthumously published "fantastic novel" *Tenderenda the Fantast*, composed between 1914 and 1920, offers another document of this transition. See Jeffrey Schnapp's illuminating introduction to Jonathan Hammer, *Ball and Hammer* (New Haven: Yale, 2002), pp. 1–21.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

art? . . . My artistic and political studies seem to be at variance with each other" (FT 100). By the time that Ball and Hennings moved to Bern in September 1917, Ball's melancholy gave way to commitment: "I am actually on the point of sacrificing the aesthete to politics" (FT 133). He mostly abandoned his cultural endeavors—although he continued to speculate on aesthetics in his journal—and began to work as a political journalist, writing for the antiwar and pro-Entente newspaper the *Freie Zeitung* with peers such as Ernst Bloch, Hermann Hesse, and Carl von Ossietzky.[54]

In the best account of Ball's phase as a journalist, Anson Rabinbach notes that what linked Ball to the politics of the *Freie Zeitung* was a simultaneous insistence on German war guilt and a philosophical atmosphere that was "entirely chiliastic and apocalyptic."[55] These concerns brought him especially close both to his "utopian friend" Bloch and to his neighbor Walter Benjamin, introduced to one another by Ball in April 1919 (FT 145).[56] In these years, Bloch shared with Ball, whom he dubbed a "Christian Bakuninist," a violent opposition to German patriotism, support for the Western allies, interest in theology and utopian anarchism, and resistance to communism (temporary in Bloch's case).[57] Gershom Scholem recalls that Benjamin, for his part, spoke frequently of visits to Ball's home and was evidently impressed with this curious figure, "an extreme republican but not a Socialist or a Communist . . . a fanatical hater of everything Prussian."[58] In fact, Scholem argues that the impetus for Benjamin's turn to Marxism in these years was his experience of Ball and Bloch's intense commitment to fusing philosophical-theological speculation with political action.[59] However, if Ball's theological politics could exist for a short time in a productive tension with the Jewish messianism of Bloch and Benjamin, the insurmountable differences between their positions exploded into view with the publication of his first book. Indeed, Scholem remembers, "Toward the end of winter Benjamin gave me a thick, passionate pamphlet entitled *Zur Kritik der Deutschen*

54. Mann writes that there has been speculation that the *Freie Zeitung* was a propaganda organ funded by the Triple Entente states. In 1976, Bloch described himself and his colleagues at the newspaper as "bribed dogs" and "traitors for money." Cited in Mann, *Hugo Ball*, p. 111. Rabinbach cautions that although the newspaper's politics were pro-Entente, the evidence for these allegations is largely circumstantial. See Rabinbach, "Inverted Nationalism," p. xvi.

55. Ibid.

56. Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship* (New York: New York Review, 2003), p. 97.

57. Rabinbach, "Inverted Nationalism," pp. xvi–xvii. See also Rabinbach, "Between Apocalypse and Enlightenment: Benjamin, Bloch, and Modern German-Jewish Messianism," in *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals Between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997), pp. 27–65.

58. Scholem, *Walter Benjamin,* p. 96.

59. Ibid., p. 98.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

Intelligenz. It impressed both of us with the acuity of its hatred, but other parts of it . . . only made us shake our heads."[60]

Begun in 1917 and published on the same day that the Freikorps murdered the Spartakus League's leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, *Critique of the German Intelligentsia* was a violent denunciation of the war and the culmination of Ball's activity as a political journalist. An attempt to establish Germany's guilt for the devastation of World War I, Ball's text ranged from splenetic expressions of anti-bourgeois sentiment to violent attacks on Marxist economism, from critiques of Protestant theology to anti-Semitic tirades, from a discourse on Bakunin to a plea for a Christian spiritual elite to reverse the decline of German culture into materialism. While the text was prescient for its recognition of the threat posed by Germany's refusal to face up to its role in the "Great War" and its retreat into nationalistic fantasy, Ball based his analysis on the presumed existence of a secret alignment of Prussian militarism, Protestant and Jewish theology, and German Idealist philosophy. The "Satanic Power" of the German war machine, "attempting to conquer the world from that home base," was the instrument of a Jewish-Prussian conspiracy "seeking to subjugate Europe and the world, and bent on the universal destruction of religion and morals," against which the only recourse would be to incorporate Germany into a league of European nations led by a Christian hierarchy.[61]

Like Schmitt, who situated the "ultimate roots" of an "individualistically disintegrated society . . . in the private priesthood," Ball traced the crisis of contemporary Germany back to the Protestant Reformation (PR 20).[62] However, with more brazenness than Schmitt would permit himself before he joined the Nazi party on May 1, 1933—at the urging of Martin Heidegger, it should be noted[63]—Ball claimed that Jewish theology was the driving force behind the Reformation's negative consequences and, ultimately, behind those of modernity in general. In Ball's bizarre theological narrative, the Judaicization of Christianity had already begun with Saint Paul, who "introduced that sanguine reconciliation between the Old and the New Testaments . . . [thereby] subjugating the Christian rebel (crucified by oppressors) to the ancient god of the Jews" (CGI 32). Consequently, Luther's emphasis on "the priesthood of all believers" led to a "superstitious idolatry of a text," thus collapsing Christianity back into the "Jewish tradition." "This choice signaled endless obscurity" for Ball, as "each person became a theologian" (CGI 30–31). The *Critique*'s mad historical-theological

60. Ibid., p. 96.
61. Ball, *Critique of the German Intelligentsia*, pp. 19, 1–2. Henceforth, CGI in parentheses.
62. On Ball and the Reformation, see the important essay by Debbie Lewer "Hugo Ball, Iconoclasm, and the Origins of Dada in Zurich," pp. 17–35.
63. Balakrishnan, *The Enemy*, p. 181.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

schema can be summarized in Ball's syllogism, "Luther derived from Paul the Jewish *défaitismus* of morals" (CGI 33).

Ball's anti-Semitism, as Rabinbach and Brian Harris demonstrated, was no mere personal defect or eccentricity that could be imagined to exist apart from the *Critique*'s core argument against the war.[64] Indeed, Ball peppered his text with denials of personal anti-Semitism precisely at the moments when the book degenerated into a diatribe against "the German-Jewish conspiracy to destroy morality."[65] It is clear that the figure of the Jew was the structuring enemy of Ball's entire political theory, embodying the processes of secularization and rationalization in all their forms: "Rabbi Paul" reverses Christ's sacrifice by preserving the God of the Old Testament; Luther delivers Christianity to a Jewish "idolatry" of the word; Hegel authors a "Talmudic dialectic"; and Bolshevism perpetrates a "vengeful Jewish terrorism" (CGI 13). In paranoid words that would fit comfortably in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and were excised from the 1970 edition, Ball wrote:

> It must be admitted that the exploitative and mercantilistic tradition does have a more profound hold on the Jewish mind than even Jews are aware of. Not to be underestimated either is the broader view of the Jewish race, wherein it is not the achievement of the individual that is decisive but the result to which his conspiratorial work often leads generations later. The individual sacrifices himself for the Jewish ideal. The individual may be revolutionary; he can seem to betray his race, but developments will show that he was responsible to it alone (CGI 145).

Here, in concentrated form, is the structure of anti-Semitism: the construction of the Jew as a phantasmic screen onto which can be projected any tendency deemed harmful or negative (in Ball's case, materialism as such), and the conviction that the essence of "the Jew" is not to be found in any particular individual but rather in a supra-individual conspiracy to advance the "race" as a whole. Conceived as such, the threat of the Jew to the anti-Semite is at its most acute precisely at the moment when the anti-Semitic stereotype seems to collapse. An individual Jew who opposes exploitation or mercantilism is in fact the most convincing and dangerous evidence for the existence of a Jewish conspiracy to advance exploitation in the name of mercantilism. For in seeming to "betray his

64. See Harris's edition of the *Critique* and his dissertation "Hugo Ball's Critique of the German Mind: Notes to Hugo Ball's *Zur Kritik der Deutschen Intelligenz*" (University of Texas at Austin, 1979).

65. Ball wrote, for example, "It is not my intention to fuel the fires of anti-Semitism....I would count myself fortunate indeed to be of equal service to social, Jewish, and German emancipation" (CGI 142). Elderfield notes that Ball first encountered anti-Semitic ideas while writing his unfinished book on Nietzsche in Heidelberg in 1907–8, and "had an operation to straighten his nose after having been mistakenly taken for a Jew" (FT xvi).

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

race," a "revolutionary" Jew such as Marx actually confirmed the nature of the Jewish mentality, where the interests of the individual are suppressed in favor of the advancement of the group.[66]

According to Ball, "a new hierarchy" was needed to combat the trifecta of Protestantism, German nationalism, and Judaism, which had conspired to destroy morality and authentic religion in favor of economistic materialism (CGI 20). Only the assertion of divine authority over the secular world could offer a stable ground for renewal. It alone could achieve

> a spiritual and moral society with invisible graduations capable once again of gaining the upper hand over the Satanism of a profanity composed of vestigial fabrications and formulae, a profanity that at this moment celebrates its hideous orgy of death (CGI 20).

In contradiction to his avowed hatred of theocracy and support for democracy, Ball imagined an intellectual-spiritual Christian elite that could oppose the deadly rationality of the economic worldview and unite Europe under its enlightened rule.[67] Echoing Schmitt's "Christ or Barabbas," Ball concluded,

> If you hold the . . . view that welfare, freedom, and independence of the individual—not the *exploitation* of the world—is the meaning of this life, then you cannot expect much from a Prussianized Europe operating under Jewish directive, and will have to propose this alternative: Christ or Jehovah (CGI 144).

Hugo Ball's Political Theology

With his conversion to Roman Catholicism, Ball believed he had found a path to overcome the Romantic juxtaposition of mutually exclusive political and

66. As Rabinbach establishes, Ball's anti-Semitism was already on display by November 1918, when he published an editorial in the *Freie Zeitung* that imagined a "purified nation" and raved against "anational Israelites" (CGI xxvi). This editorial led to Bloch's resignation from the paper the following month and put a severe strain on their relationship. Bloch recalled, "I wrote Ball immediately that this sort of anti-Semitism is scandalous, no matter how he means it," and noted elsewhere, "Ball knows full well . . . that I am a completely racially conscious Jew, and that I am proud of my old, secretive people, and that I am, in my best aspects, at home in Jewish blood and the great religious tradition of my people" (CGI xxvi).

67. Mann writes, "Ball can be seen relinquishing both the radical Modernist critique of culture and revolutionary remedies and espousing a conservative ideology which, rejecting the present age as fallen and decadent, looks backward to an idealized Golden Age and forward to a future Utopia when the Golden Age will be re-established." Mann, *Hugo Ball*, p. 110. Rabinbach disputes the characterization of Ball's text as "conservative," arguing that in 1919, Ball was still "a republican radical for whom the Rights of Man and democracy are not incompatible with Christian anarchism and revolutionary Gnosticism" (CGI xxiii).

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

theological positions that he soon came to recognize in the *Critique*.[68] In a diary entry dated August 9, 1920, following his permanent retreat to Sorengo with Hennings, Ball reflected on the politically consolidating effect of his conversion: "There is only one power that measures up to the disintegrating tradition: Catholicism. Not the prewar and wartime Catholicism, but a new, deeper, integral Catholicism that will not be intimidated, that scorns advantages, that knows Satan and defends right whatever the cost" (FT 193). Ball worked through his vision of political Catholicism most fully in his review of Schmitt's *Political Theology* from 1924, which also represented a drastic reformulation of the relationship between rationalization and the irrational that had consumed him since the Dada years.

In passages with great autobiographical resonance, Ball devoted a significant portion of his review to *Political Romanticism*. The Romantics believed, Ball wrote, that "the bounds of the hitherto mechanistic age should be blasted open, and the otherworldly speculations of spiritual revolution be transplanted onto the solid ground of reality" (CSPT 70). However, the Romantic lacked any practical means to achieve this transplantation into reality save the degraded form of "subjectified occasionalism" that set aesthetic productivity against "the demonic world." "And so the genius, attired as a dandy or a rebel," Ball proclaimed with self-flagellating irony, "glosses over the hollow bankruptcy of culture and feels himself to be the refuge of all higher life" (CSPT 68). The value placed by Romantics on individual creativity replicated "the general interchange and confusion of concepts, a boundless promiscuity of words and values" characteristic of modernity's fragmentation of experience and tradition (CSPT 69).[69] In the end, the "Romantics' attempt to explode the rational mechanism of its day"—a description closer to Dada than to Schlegel—invariably led to political deadlock, little more than "illusions of a fantasized primitivity" (CSPT 72).

Situating Schmitt in "an age that worships nothing, that fights or mocks ideology," Ball contended that he offered a coherent *Weltanschauung* to oppose Romantic indecision and the legitimation crisis incurred by secularization (CSPT 66), that he was an "ideologist" fit to counter the preeminence of what G.K. Chesterton called "the practical man": "A practical man means a man accustomed to mere daily practice, to the way things commonly work. When things will not work, you must have the thinker, the man who has some doctrine about

68. As early as June 5, 1919, Ball regretted the book's political eclecticism, noting, "I tried to link the different European slogans of yesterday and today and thus committed the patriotic mistake of wishing to see them all realized in Germany in a single attempt" (FT 166).

69. In this sense, Ball's diagnosis accords with John McCormick's description of Romanticism's paradoxically mimetic relationship to rationalization: "Activity that drains concrete specificity from the actual world so that it may manipulate its components, rationalization, is mirrored by activity that endlessly imputes a random concrete specificity to aspects of that world in a subjective scheme of manipulation, Romanticism." McCormick, "Transcending Weber's Categories of Modernity?," p. 147.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

why they work at all" (CSPT 65). Through this citation of the orthodox Catholic writer, Ball cut directly to Schmitt's core philosophical conviction, which united his politics and his theology: "The exception is more interesting than the rule. The rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything" (PT 15). For Schmitt, "whether the extreme exception can be banished from the world is not a juristic question. Whether one has confidence and hope that it can be eliminated depends on philosophical, especially on philosophical-historical or metaphysical, convictions" (PT 7).

In Schmitt's metaphysical claim that the exception manifested the absolute, Ball perceived the outlines of a "Catholic (universal) physiognomy" and proceeded to read the entirety of Schmitt's legal and political philosophy as a Christian theory of representation (CSPT 65). Ball claimed that while "by no means is Schmitt already a theologian and Roman Catholic from his first steps . . . [his] results are achieved incrementally from logical consequences" (CSPT 68). In other words, Ball argued that Schmitt's thought implied a rational apology for the Church—that, almost despite itself, Schmitt's work was immanently driven toward Catholicism. While this claim may seem idiosyncratic to a contemporary reader most familiar with Schmitt's reception as a realist critic of liberal democracy, Schmitt himself recognized in 1970 that Ball's review brought to light submerged aspects of his thought: "Hugo Ball, who did not belong to the professional class (for he was neither a professional theologian nor a professional jurist), was the only one who paid attention . . . and he did not gloss over the details of the discussion. His essay . . . strikes the critical reader even today."[70]

Schmitt's primary concern in the late 1910s and '20s was, in Ball's words, to inquire "into the actual application of law so as to arrive, following the facts, at its ultimate and decisive form" (CSPT 67). Seeking to ascertain the ultimate point of derivation of legal order and state power, Schmitt engaged in a long-standing debate with the normative legal theory proposed by neo-Kantian positivists such as Hans Kelsen, who sought to strip the law of its subjective elements in order to arrive at "the impersonal validity of an impersonal norm" (PT 29). For Kelsen, a state's authority derived from—and was legitimized by—its constitution, i.e., an impersonal system of norms ideally forming a logical unity.[71] For Schmitt, conversely, state power necessarily existed prior to legal order, the former being in fact the sole assurance of the latter's existence. Schmitt thus characterized legal scholars such as Kelsen in terms similar to Chesterton's "practical man," as singularly useless in moments when the law and the state faced an existential threat from within (civil war or insurrection) or

70. Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 143, note 6.

71. See the discussion of the regulative force of legal norms in Hans Kelsen, *Pure Theory of Law*, trans. Max Knight (Berkeley: University of California, 1978), pp. 30–50.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

from without (attack from a foreign enemy).[72] In such states of emergency throughout history, Schmitt argued, the only means to secure the continued existence of the law lay paradoxically in its temporary suspension through the absolute exercise of state power.[73] An analysis of these situations led Schmitt to the famous dictum of *Political Theology*, "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception" (PT 5). The sovereign not only decides what constitutes a state of exception and when one is to be put in place but, more important, secures the very possibility for a "normal situation" to exist at all. Therefore, Schmitt argued, the legal order's point of origin was not in norms established through rational consensus but in the absolute exercise of sovereign authority: *auctoritas, non veritas facit legem* (authority, not truth, makes the law).[74]

Formalizing his critique of Romantic indecision, Schmitt concluded that the point of ascription of the law, that is, its foundation and the force of its application, lay in a personal decision and not in an impersonal norm. Ball described this aspect of Schmitt's thought as a "vigorous personalism" absolutely opposed to the objectivity of scholars like Kelsen, "whose impersonal and anonymous physiognomy excludes almost any independent consciousness" (CSPT 85). Ball summarized Schmitt's argument thus: "Law is present where decisions are made; where there is decision without appeal, there is the sovereign; and where the sovereign's decisions transpire is the state of exception" (CSPT 83). Indeed, Schmitt, delighting in the philosophical parallax, posited that the decision, "if looked at normatively," "emanates from nothingness. . . . Ascription is not achieved with the aid of a norm; it happens the other way around" (PT 32). The state of exception reveals the paradox at the core of legal order: that the force of the law is based on nothing but lawless authority, that it emanates from a point of "anomie" within the law itself, as Giorgio Agamben puts it.[75] Therefore, the state of exception is what Schmitt called a *Grenzbegriff* or "borderline concept," which he characterized as being "not a vague concept, but one pertaining to the outermost sphere" (PT 5).

72. In his preface to *Political Theology*, written in November 1933, Schmitt described Kelsen's legal theory as "degenerate" (read: Jewish) (PT 3). Indeed, Schmitt's anti-Semitism during the Third Reich was based on his opposition to the Jew as a figure devoted to the norm, incapable of conceiving of the state of exception: "There are peoples who exist only in 'the Law,' without soil, without a state, without a church; to them, normative thought is the only rational juristic thought, and any other mode of thinking is inconceivable, mystical, fantastic, or laughable." Quoted in Balakrishnan, *The Enemy*, p. 206.

73. Canonical examples of such cases include the USA Patriot Act of 2001, Lincoln's suspension of *habeus corpus* during the American Civil War, and the Weimar Republic's infamous article 48, which allowed the President to revoke civil freedoms in cases of emergency. See Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005), pp. 1–31.

74. As Schmitt claimed, "What characterizes an exception is principally unlimited authority, which means the suspension of the entire existing order. In such a situation, it is clear that the state remains, whereas law recedes" (PT 12).

75. In Agamben's formulation, the "force-of-law in Schmitt's thought "is certainly something like a mystical element, or rather a *fictio* by means of which law seeks to annex anomie itself." Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 39.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

This limit-concept that secured the law's conditions of possibility but remained "wholly other" to the law represented, for Schmitt, the moment when "the power of real life breaks through the crust of a mechanism that has become torpid by repetition" (PT 15).

The groundlessness of the law, Ball asserted, did not have "just a juristic significance, but a universal one" (CSPT 79). "What is demonstrated" in Schmitt's theory of the exception, Ball wrote, is the "spontaneous emergence of the divine into the chaos of history, one could say: the political miracle" (CSPT 76). Indeed, Schmitt insisted that the exception was the structural correlate within the political sphere to the concept of the miracle in theology (PT 36). Further, in opposition to the secularizing drive of the legal positivists, Schmitt famously claimed, "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts" (PT 37). More than simply describing the result of a historical process of secularization, the political-theological analogy, for Schmitt, implied a fundamental isomorphism between the sovereign decision that rests on *nothing*, underivable from the norm, and the authority of God, which transcends all worldly law. In his lectures on Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans, the eminent sociologist and philosopher Jacob Taubes reflects on his decades-long study of and correspondence with Schmitt and argues that "secularization is thus not a positive concept for Schmitt. On the contrary, to him it is the devil. His objection is: the law of the state doesn't understand itself." This, Taubes writes, "is why castles are built that on the day of the true emergency collapse into nothing."[76]

Ball's essay, as Taubes acknowledged, was one of the first to discern the melancholia underlying Schmitt's theses on secularization.[77] Schmitt's core struggle, in Ball's view, was to establish a concrete point of contact between the rational world of politics and statecraft and the "higher irrational values" of theology (CSPT 67). To accomplish what Schmitt described as the "goal of all philosophical endeavor—to reach the irrational philosophically" would involve the rational discovery of actually existing forms that would incarnate the irrational exception in the world (PR 67, CSPT 72). This is why Ball characterized Schmitt as "a rationalist in questions of state" but an "irrationalist" "in theological questions" (CSPT 80). To clarify this seeming contradiction, Ball identified in all of Schmitt's work "the opposition of *ratio* and the irrational" (CSPT 77). Following Schmitt, Ball employed the Latin term *ratio* to signify

76. Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, trans. Dana Hollander (Stanford: Stanford University, 2004), p. 64–66. More recently, Tracy B. Strong has argued that Schmitt conceived secularization as "a hollowing out of political concepts," resulting in the loss of "the element of transcendence." For Strong, "[political concepts] thus no longer have, as it were, the force and strength that they had earlier and are unable to resist the dynamics of technology. The consequence of Schmitt's notion of secularization is to try and restore to the concepts of sovereignty and political authority in a secular age the quality that they had earlier." Strong, *Politics without Vision*, pp. 240–41.

77. Ball's essay on Schmitt was first republished in Taubes, ed. *Der Fürst dieser Welt: Carl Schmitt und die Folgen.* (Munich: W. Fink, 1983), pp. 100–15.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

"not only 'reason' [*Vernunft*] but also 'explanation,' 'measure,' 'law,' and 'method,'" and thereby to avoid any confusion with the "mechanical conception of the world" (CSPT 79). Likewise, Ball specified two meanings of the irrational: the "non-rational and the supra-rational." The first applied to the "artificial irrationalism" of the Romantic or the Dadaist, who abstractly negated the mechanistic age through a flight into unreason. The supra-rational, conversely, referred to the precinct of theology, "the world of inspiration and revelation, the canonic and sacramental world" (CSPT 79). "The unity of Schmitt's work," Ball wrote, "rests on his explication of the relations of reason [*Vernunftsbeziehungen*] to the supra-rational, which is the principle that gives it form [*Formprinzip*]" (CSPT 85). In this principle, Ball identified the shared structure of each of the great concepts of Schmitt's work. The sovereign, the decision, and the state of exception are instances in which the superior and underivable force of the supra-rational erupts within the rational, practical, and "normal" world, thereby lending it coherence and form.

Schmitt's emphasis on the union of the *ratio* and the supra-rational, as Ball demonstrated, allowed him to set his political theory against two opposed enemies: the rationalist and the irrationalist political-theological deviations. In the first camp, Schmitt located Kelsen's normativism, Marxism, and capitalism, which were united in their drive to abolish "higher irrational values" by founding their worldviews on putatively apolitical mechanisms (whether scientific norms, economic-historical laws, or the profit imperative). The second camp was the "irrationalist" deviation, which insisted on the direct and immediate force of the exception, irreducible to any formalization or institutionalization.

This latter model, which found its strongest historical representatives in the anarchism of Proudhon and Bakunin, presented a philosophical and political problem to both Schmitt and Ball that could not easily be dispelled. Anarchism had exerted a major influence on Ball's thought, running from his Proudhonian opposition to the discipline of the word in Dada all the way to his still often-favorable citations of Bakunin as an opponent of Marx in the *Critique* (FT 22). For Ball, against the mechanistic rationalism of Marxism, anarchism based itself upon a metaphysical idea—it was, indeed, the moment when "negation erupted into metaphysics" (HBCS 5). Schmitt, likewise, took anarchism seriously as a genuine political idea, dedicating the final chapter of *Political Theology* to distinguishing the counterrevolutionary theorists Bonald, de Maistre, and Donoso Cortés from the anarchist tradition of Babeuf, Bakunin, and Kropotkin. For Schmitt, "Bakunin, the greatest anarchist of the nineteenth century, [was] in theory the theologian of the antitheological and in practice the dictator of an antidictatorship" (PT 66). Against Marx, who tended to appear as a rationalistic "schoolmaster," the "intellectual significance" of Bakunin rested on an authentic, if ultimately negative, "conception of life" (PT 64).[78] Heinrich Meier, in fact, argues that Schmitt derived the concept of political theology directly from his

78. Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 70.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

engagement with Bakunin.[79] For Bakunin, as for Schmitt, all worldly power derived its authority from an analogy with divine power; however, denying the existence of God, Bakunin attacked the legitimacy of the state's superiority over its citizens. Schmitt identified Bakunin's anarchism as an atheist political theology and raised it over and above weaker secularizations of metaphysics as the "true enemy of all traditional concepts of Western European culture."[80]

By the early 1920s, Ball and Schmitt regarded the French theorist of militant syndicalism Georges Sorel as the thinker who embodied the consequences of Bakunin's inverted political theology in its most potent and threatening form. Explicated in *Réflexions sur la violence* (1908), Sorel's theory of the proletarian general strike was categorized by Schmitt as an "irrationalist theory of the direct use of force."[81] Opposed to the institutionalization of working-class *élan* in the workers' state, Sorel conferred an absolute positive value to the rupture opened by proletarian violence that did not find its *telos* in the seizure of state power; rather, it suspended the existing order in its entirety. Sorel wrote, "In the total ruin of institutions and of morals there remains something which is powerful, new, and intact, and it is that which constitutes, properly speaking, the soul of the revolutionary proletariat."[82] In what Schmitt identified as an inheritance from Bergson, Sorel located a mythic "creative force" (*force créatrice*) in the pure destructive violence of the proletariat, which, Schmitt generously noted, was "certainly not refuted by the fact that Bergson has become *passé*."[83] Therefore, unlike Marxism-Leninism's technical-rational garb, Sorel's writing offered "a theory of direct, active decision," and therefore qualified as a legitimate enemy in Schmitt's view.[84] The creative opening of the general strike—in which the direct and unmediated life of the people surged forth and abolished the norm—did indeed mirror the structure of the exception. It was precisely against this danger of an anomic exception that would not find its way back to the law that Schmitt developed the formal principle of the sovereign decision.[85]

79. In Meier's words, "What is nothing but a man-made fiction for the atheistic anarchist, is God-given reality for the political theologian." See Meier, *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt*, pp. 7–10.
80. Cited in ibid., p. 7.
81. Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, p. 65.
82. Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T. E. Hulme (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1915), p. 295. Sorel embodies many of the contradictory and troubling characteristics of Romantic anticapitalism, with a personal trajectory encompassing anarcho-syndicalism and dalliances with the *Action Française*. Without using the term "Romantic," Alice Yaeger Kaplan points toward the aestheticizing quality of Sorel's writing, noting that "we are, in *Reflections on Violence*, always one step away from the problem of direct political action and firmly immersed in the problem of recognizing and mythologizing politically influential actions or events." Kaplan, "Slogan Text: Sorel," in *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature and French Intellectual Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986), p. 62.
83. Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, p. 66. Cited by Ball in CSPT 79.
84. Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, p. 68.
85. Walter Benjamin's great essay "Critique of Violence" (1921) offered another contemporaneous response to Sorel, one that, according to Agamben, Schmitt likely read (Agamben, *State of Exception*, pp. 52–53). Like Schmitt, Benjamin contended that Sorel touched "not merely on a cultur-

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

If the anarchist and the counterrevolutionary traditions both accepted the mythic power of the exception, their divergent attitudes toward it were rooted, according to Ball and Schmitt, in opposed conceptions of human nature. Sorel's faith in the redemptive force of the popular will placed him in a lineage—one stretching from Rousseau and the Jacobins to Proudhon and Kropotkin—that considered "man, the people, the proletariat, and even the *Lumpenproletariat*" to be "naturally good—indeed, [to be] the very salvation of the world" (CSPT 78). Conversely, Schmitt and Ball placed themselves in the tradition of a Catholic philosophy of the state that ranged from Bonald to Donoso Cortés and was driven by the faith that humanity, tainted by original sin, was "by nature vile, fallen, bestial, rabble (rather than frail, ignorant, weak, and in need of emancipation)" (CSPT 77). Politically, Ball and Schmitt recognized that the first tradition implied popular sovereignty and self-government, while the second led to absolutism and dictatorship. Ball and Schmitt, therefore, recast the political struggle between anarchism and authoritarianism in terms of a metaphysical or theological war. In Ball's words, "The opposition inscribed Satanism on its flag; with the thesis that 'man is good,' they fight for the destruction of ideology. The ideologists, and especially Cortés, fight for metaphysics under the banner of God, with the axiom that 'man is worse than a reptile'" (CSPT 78).

Figuring Authority

In a judgment that runs counter to most present-day assessments, Ball argued that Schmitt's drive to reach the irrational philosophically found its most convincing and elegant expression in his essay *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* (1923). In this text, Schmitt argued that the Catholic Church was not only a historical model of reconciliation between state and religious orders; it was also home to a mythic power that could uniquely oppose both the rationalist (i.e., bourgeois and state socialist) and the irrationalist (i.e., anarchist) deviations from authentic political form. The great strength of Catholicism was that it did not consider the rational and the irrational dualistically. On the one hand, the Church was not a

al-historical truth, but also on a metaphysical truth" when he situated the origin of law in violence and authority, rather than in justice or in the norms established by positivist legal philosophy. Departing from Sorel, Benjamin sought a *just* form of violence that would be irreducible to the dual forms of legal violence (law-making violence and law-preserving violence), which he qualifies as pernicious forms of "mythic violence." It is perhaps on the question of myth that one could begin to distinguish Benjamin's "divine violence" from Sorel's myth of the "general strike" and Schmitt's sovereign decision. Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, *1913–1926,* ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2002), pp. 236–52. On the distinction between law and justice in Benjamin's essay, see Agamben, pp. 52–64, and Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: the 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" trans. Mary Quaintance, *Cardozo Law Review* 11, no. 5–6 (1990), pp. 920–1045. Regarding Benjamin and Schmitt, see Samuel Weber, "Taking Exception to Decision: Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt," in *Benjamin's –abilities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2008), pp. 176–94.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

"therapeutic" space of irrational consolation that would render it "the desired complement of capitalism—a hygienic institution for enduring the rigors of competition" (something, that is to say, like aesthetics).[86] On the other hand, Schmitt noted that those who critique Catholicism as a "misuse of Christianity because it mechanizes religion into a soulless formality" were disproved by the recurring fact that "Protestants return in Romantic flight to the Catholic Church seeking salvation from the soullessness of a rationalistic and mechanistic age" (RCPF 11).

With typical polemical verve, Schmitt contended that while partisans of the "anti-Roman temper" long pointed to the seeming political eclecticism or opportunism of Catholicism (with liberal and conservative wings, administrative and spiritualist tendencies, alternatively typified by accommodation and intransigence), they had scarcely begun to grasp Catholicism's ability to hold opposites in its sway. Indeed, Schmitt affirmed that the Church was above all a "complex of opposites, a *complexio oppositorum*" (RCPF 7). Unlike the synthesizing movement of the dialectic, which raised antitheses to a "higher third" and thereby neutralized them, Schmitt conceived the Catholic *complexio oppositorum* as nurturing the agonistic tension of political contradictions by embracing them under a higher—indeed, universal—authority.[87]

The Catholic *complexio* was most potently manifest in its mediation between the *ratio* and the supra-rational, precisely the opposition that Ball identified throughout Schmitt's work. Far from merely being an agent of spiritual irrationalism, the Church had also been a force for the advancement of the *ratio*, a duality epitomized by the figure of the Pope. The Pope, for Schmitt, "is truly the most astounding *complexio oppositorum*": an autocratic monarch, elected by an aristocracy of cardinals, "regardless of his birth or stature," to represent God on Earth (RCPF 14, 7). Indeed, the Pope embodied the *complexio* in personal form, uniting the higher irrationality of God with a specifically juridical and institutional body, which legitimized the sovereign decision. "Culminating with the most precise dogmatism and a will to decision . . . in the doctrine of papal infallibility," Schmitt wrote, "the political power of Catholicism rests neither on economic nor on military means, but rather on the absolute realization of authority . . . a concrete personal representation of a concrete personality" (RCPF 18). In his review, Ball argued that Schmitt had discovered that "the sovereign dictator can only be legitimated within the Church" and found in Catholicism a concrete point of contact between divine and earthly authority (CSPT 82).

The novelty of Schmitt's position in *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* was to have conceived this rational realization of supra-rational authority as a problem

86. Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp. 11–12. Henceforth parenthetically referred to as RCPF.

87. For an excellent discussion of the *complexio*'s anti-dialectical character and its implications for political philosophy more broadly, see Michael Marder, "Carl Schmitt's 'Cosmopolitan Restaurant': Culture, Multiculturalism, and *Complexio Oppositorum*," *Telos* 142 (Spring 2008), p. 30.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

of representation and figuration.[88] "Those are the basic concepts around which the Latin Carl Schmitt arranges his work," Ball wrote, "and which, true to his antithesis, he employs in the relation of *ratio* to *repraesentatio*: a Scholastic theme in concretely modern garb" (CSPT 89). Schmitt's anti-dialectical solution to this "Scholastic" problem would run as follows: Catholicism's political value is epitomized by its status as a *complexio oppositorum*, able to unite even the antithesis between the *ratio* and the supra-rational; however, to avoid rationalizing this opposition by sublating it, Catholicism proposes a "strict realization of the principle of representation" whereby the supra-individual authority of Christ is incarnated in the personal figure of the Pope, representing the divine within the rational arena of politics and providing the source of its legitimacy (RCPF 8). Therefore, Ball noted, Schmitt's "inclination to the absolute" was to lead "in its final consequence not to an abstraction that conditions everything—be it God, form, authority, or whatever else—but rather to the Pope as the absolute person, who represents a once more concrete world of irrational persons and values that cannot be compassed by logic" (CSPT 67).

Ball's essay ends by highlighting in Schmitt's concept of Catholic representation what could be called a figurative politics, a displaced aesthetic theory. Throughout *Roman Catholicism*, Schmitt implied that the legitimacy of a given society's artistic forms, its very capacity to create meaningful images of itself, was secured—through something like a conservative model of superstructural reflection—by the legitimacy of that society's forms of political representation. This was why the Catholic mode of representation was the authentic enemy to "the mechanistic world of big cities, whose stone, iron, and glass structures lie on the face of the earth like colossal Cubist configurations" (RCPF 10). Concurring with this view, Ball stated that the enemies of Catholicism, from Marx to Bakunin, from the bourgeois financier to the legal positivist, were "equally hostile to political responsibility and to artistic form. . . . They are directed against metaphysical dignity and against the heroism of man. . . . What these adversaries have in common is an aversion to the rational formative power of the absolute" (CSPT 91). The Cubist fragmentation of figurative representation in art was a natural complement to bourgeois society's disorganization and its political animus against the "personal," exemplified by legal normativism's drive to replace the sovereign decision with the impersonal norm. Conversely, the inhuman banality of Communist culture reflected its substitution of class and the economy for God according to the rational laws of history.[89] Against both these tendencies, the Catholic

88. Discussing representation in relation to publicness, Jürgen Habermas refers to Schmitt's concept of representation as the embodied "aura" of authority. Habermas also cites Schmitt's sardonic observation in *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* that the Church "no longer represents anything except representation itself." Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 7–8; p. 252, notes 12, 14. I am grateful to Samuel Johnson for alerting me to this passage.

89. Schmitt sneered that Communism was "so little capable of creating an image that even the Russian Soviet Republic found no other symbol for its badge of rule than the hammer and sickle" (RCPF 22).

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

Church was "the sole surviving contemporary example of the medieval capacity to create representative figures" (RCPF 19). In the formalization of absolute power in the person of the Pope, Schmitt contended, Catholicism presented a model in which "representation invests the representative person with a special dignity": "[Representation] is home to the political idea of Catholicism and its capacity to embody the great trinity of form: the aesthetic form of art; the juridical form of law; finally, the glorious achievement of a world historical form of power" (RCPF 21). To reinstate the Pope as the absolute sovereign, "representing the absent, ecstatic, irrational person of Christ," would by extension be to mend "the bond between Church and the creative arts [that] has been broken" (RCPF 22).

It is above all this promise of an organic reconciliation between aesthetic, theological, and political form under the aegis of a Catholic imperium that accounts for Ball's great investment in Schmitt's work. For Schmitt, however, the case for Catholic dictatorship was just one contingent solution to the problem of securing the "normative guidance of human social life," and one that he would very soon abandon (RCPF 12).[90] Schmitt's commitment to Catholicism fluctuated radically throughout his life, but what remained was his guiding conviction that "there is no politics without authority and no authority without an ethos of belief" (PT 17). Indeed, Schmitt's valorization of "representation" (whether artistic or political) is at times difficult to distinguish from a general recourse to the politically galvanizing power of myth. The consequences of this politics of myth were evident, a decade prior to Schmitt's enthusiastic support for Hitler, in the case for Italian Fascism formulated in *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (1923), published soon after *Roman Catholicism*. In opposition to both the irrationalist myth of the general strike in Sorel and the mythic techno-rationalism of Marxism, Schmitt argued in this text that Mussolini, rather than the Pope, could act as the vehicle of a myth powerful enough to secure absolute authority and generate popular enthusiasm.[91] Schmitt favorably cited Mussolini's speech from his 1922 march on Rome, in which the dictator proclaimed, "We have created a myth, this myth is a belief, a noble enthusiasm; it does not need to be a reality, it is a striving and a hope, belief and courage. Our myth is the nation, the great nation which we want to make into a concrete reality

90. Balakrishnan states that shortly after the publication of *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, Schmitt had already rejected the book's two main arguments: first, that "the secular state and the Church should be joined in a partnership in which the former had direct power and the latter indirect authority," and, second, that Catholicism could offer "an authority claiming universal jurisdiction." Balakrishnan, pp. 63–64.

91. Ball does not cite this text in his review, and this silence is interesting. Although it is possible he had simply not read it by the time he drafted his piece, the inventory of his library in the Swiss Literary Archives shows that he owned two copies of the 1923 edition of *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, along with all of Schmitt's major books since *Political Romanticism*. See the Hennings-Ball Nachlaß inventory: http://ead.nb.admin.ch/html/hennings-ball.html (accessed October 7, 2013).

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

for ourselves."[92] Schmitt's own moments of political decision revealed that while he conceived of political theology as a means to protect the law and the state from illegitimate existential threats, in practice it provided the transcendental ground of legitimation for the boundless exercise of power in a total state. The mythic guarantee of political form was as accessible in Roman Catholicism as it was in Italian Fascism and the Nazi *Führerprinzip*.

For Ball, conversely, Catholicism was not merely a politically expedient myth that could be replaced, depending on circumstances, by any myth whatsoever, whether that of national destiny or that of blood and soil. Even the actually existing institutions for political Catholicism in Germany, such as the Catholic Zentrum Partei, were hopelessly compromised in Ball's eyes. The rift between Schmitt's authoritarian realism and Ball's intransigent idealism evidently came into sharp focus during their encounter in Sorengo of August 1924. Schmitt recalled feeling surprise and dismay at Ball's resigned indifference to the current state of German politics: "We didn't speak at all about political matters. One would have thought that he would be interested in the situation in Germany. Catholicism in Germany was suddenly the ruling party. . . . He saw nothing. He was absent. He thought of something else. He was totally absent."[93]

Nevertheless, Schmitt proposed that Ball draft a new introduction to *Political Romanticism*, and Ball asked Schmitt for advice regarding a hard-line Catholic revision of the *Critique* that he intended to publish under the title *The Consequences of the Reformation*. Schmitt strongly advised him not to publish this book, judging that it would harm Ball's reputation, and even offered to pay the equivalent of the publisher's advance if he withdrew his manuscript.[94] When Ball finally did publish *The Consequences of the Reformation* later that year, against Schmitt's counsel, he was deeply affected by a particularly brutal review that appeared in the Catholic *Augsburger Postzeitung* by the political scientist Waldemar Gurian, then one of Schmitt's students.[95] Ball became convinced that Schmitt had orchestrated the negative review, and wrote him a letter (that remained unsent) noting that the critique, by an "insignificant young man . . . contained facts and opinions that go back to your conversations with me."[96] Ball felt that the review was "devastating,

92. Cited in Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, p. 76. For a discussion of Schmitt and Mussolini in relation to representation and myth, see Victoria Kahn, "Hamlet or Hecuba: Carl Schmitt's Decision," *Representation* 83 (Summer 2003), pp. 67–96.

93. Cited in Kennedy, "Carl Schmitt and Hugo Ball," p. 145.

94. Ball, "465. An Carl Schmitt [27 January 1925]," in *Ball: Briefe*, vol. 1, p. 110. See also Kennedy, "Carl Schmitt and Hugo Ball," p. 144.

95. Ibid,, p. 110. On Gurian, see Hannah Arendt, "The Personality of Waldemar Gurian," *The Review of Politics* 17, no. 1 (January 1955), pp. 33–42. It bears noting that Schmitt's relationship with Gurian, a Russian-born Jew, became antagonistic following the latter's exile during the Third Reich. Balakrishnan writes, "Gurian's articles in Swiss newspapers...sought to discredit Schmitt in the eyes of the party by pointing out his past affiliations with the Centre Party, his previously close relationship with many Jews, and his essentially opportunistic nature. . . . Schmitt's enemies within Germany seized upon these disclosures, as Gurian had hoped they would." Balakrishnan, *The Enemy*, p. 204.

96. Ball, "474. An Carl Schmitt, [11 Februar 1925]," in *Ball: Briefe*, vol. 2, p. 120.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

not only for my book but for myself" and asked Schmitt for an explanation, emphasizing that he cared less about bad reviews than he did about their friendship.[97] Finally, rather than send the letter, Ball simply cut ties with Schmitt—a severance that greatly pained the jurist.[98] In a passage from the *Glossarium*, a series of notes intended for posthumous publication, written between 1947 and 1951, after his internment by the Allies, Schmitt recorded his disappointment regarding the squandered intellectual union with Ball, and emphasized again that it was above all the political form of Catholicism that they shared:

> That is the secret key word of my entire spiritual and public existence: the struggle for the peculiarly Catholic sharpening (against the neutralizers, the aesthetic idlers, against the abortionists, body-burners, and pacifists). Here on this path of Catholic sharpening . . . they all kept away from me, even Hugo Ball.[99]

Ball continued to keep his distance from Schmitt until his death in 1927, and he certainly did not complete his promised preface to *Political Romanticism*. When the reprint of this book appeared in 1925, it was Schmitt himself who introduced it, with a short essay dated September 1924—which is to say, the month of his return from Sorengo. It is hard not to read the unmistakable mark of his encounter with Ball in every line of this text, especially in those dedicated to the degeneracy of modern art after Romanticism. In words that could pass for the acrid recollections of a repentant Dadaist, Schmitt described "a time that, in the pregnant sense, is no longer capable of representation," and "an art without works, at least without works in a grand style, without representation. . . . sympathetically appropriating all forms in a tumultuous disorder" (PR 14–15). One passage in particular is striking for its almost exact correspondence with Ball's account of his lapse into a "cadence of priestly lamentation" in the Cabaret Voltaire:

> In modern society, the artist, at least in relation to his public, sociologically avails himself of certain functions of the priest, often in a comically deformed manner, and turns a stream of emotions that belong to the priest onto the genius of his own private person; . . . a poetry arises that lives off cultic and liturgical aftereffects and reminisces that it squanders away into the profane (PR 18).

97. Ibid., p. 121.

98. Ball did however send Gurian a chilling note: "On the basis of what achievements and with what passport were you allowed to write in one of the first Catholic newspapers in Germany...? If Professor Schmitt has informed me correctly, you are a young gentleman from his seminar, and not even German, but Russian. A sense of propriety and responsibility...should prohibit you from contributing reviews of any new German publications." Ball, "473. An Waldemar Gurian [11 Februar 1925]," in ibid., p. 119.

99. Schmitt, *Glossarium: Aufzeichnungen der Jahre 1947–1951* (Berlin: Duncker & Humbolt, 1991), p. 165. Cited and translated in Meier, *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt*, p. 70, note 7.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025

Doubtlessly informed by his weeks in Sorengo, Schmitt offered the figure of the "magical bishop"—here demoted to the status of a comically deformed priest—as the ultimate representative of modern art's grotesque privatization of the divine. For Schmitt and Ball, in conceiving art as the privileged other to quantification and mechanization, as a sphere for the preservation of irrational impulses exiled from the rationalistic world, the "Romantic" dream of an autonomous art in fact merely mirrored the secularization and profanation of the higher *ratio*. In a nightmarish inversion of Mallarmé's atheistic ode to the "Sumptuosity of the Void," Ball and Schmitt described an art that, once severed from the authentic principles of form that could represent the absolute in the world, was little more than a nihilistic charisma.[100]

Ball and Schmitt were therefore joined in their profound ambivalence toward the aesthetic. On the one hand, art was in their view a mere symptom of disenchantment, and pronouncements of art's "absolutization" only intensified the appearance of morbidity. On the other hand, Schmitt's thought, for all its violent animus against "aesthetic idlers," ultimately advanced a theory of representation that was deeply attractive to Ball, a legitimizing principle of form that would reconcile politics, law, and culture. This duality attained a supremely disquieting force in Ball's "return to order" and is a likely cause for art history's failure to recognize it as such. For Ball manifested in distorted form the characteristics of two normally opposed tendencies that stemmed from the perceived exhaustion of avant-garde autocritique in the interwar years: first, the attempt to realize directly in everyday life the utopian hopes of the avant-garde through the rush from aesthetic negation to political praxis; and, second, the various returns to the supremacy of figurative representation. Ball's embrace of the "Pope as absolute person" was simultaneously neither and both, a *complexio oppositorum* seeking to reinstate the principle of representation to a world that had abandoned God in metaphysics, the sovereign in politics, and "the heroism of man" in art. In Ball's flight from aesthetics to politics to theology, the perennial avant-garde slogan of the "end of art" paradoxically led to the aestheticization of politics and the figuration of authority.

100. At the same time as his friend Henri Cazalis was writing his *Livre du Néant*, Mallarmé planned a work entitled *La Somptuosité du Néant*. See the letter to Cazalis dated April 3, 1870, in Mallarmé, *Correspondance complète,* p. 470.

Downloaded from http://direct.mit.edu/octo/article-pdf/doi/10.1162/OCTO_a_00156/1753727/octo_a_00156.pdf by guest on 21 November 2025